

# **GRADUATE POLICY AND PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND  
RESOURCE ECONOMICS**

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**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

**East Lansing, MI 48824-1039 USA**

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## I. PURPOSE

This document describes the graduate programs offered by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics and the criteria and procedures used for admitting students to them. The requirements of the master's and Ph.D. programs are set forth, along with policies and guidelines pertaining to student advising, evaluation of academic performance, research integrity, student conduct and conflict resolution, and graduate assistantships. Program timetables and a checklist of administrative forms and deadlines are also included. Additional information about the graduate program can be found on the department's website, [www.afre.msu.edu](http://www.afre.msu.edu) and an intranet site available to the department's graduate students.

Appeals concerning interpretation of this document may be referred to the department chairperson for determination.<sup>1</sup> Under extremely unusual circumstances a student or a guidance committee may petition the faculty representatives on the Graduate Policy Committee of the department for a waiver or modification of these policies for the specific student, subject to approval by the department chairperson.

## II. OVERVIEW

### A. Introduction to Graduate Education

The graduate program is an important part of the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics. Substantial physical and financial resources, as well as faculty effort, are devoted to the program and to the creation of an intellectual environment conducive to effective learning.

Students entering graduate school assume responsibility for their own academic and professional development with the support of the faculty. Formal learning situations such as classes and thesis and dissertation research are important in the student's development and preparation for post-degree responsibilities. Additional development is expected through individual study and thought, interaction with other students and faculty, and by taking advantage of other learning opportunities such as seminars and professional meetings.

To facilitate the personal development of graduate students, the department's program is flexible and permits some freedom of action by both students and faculty. Though some common requirements must be satisfied, a range of programs can be developed to fit individual interests and needs. Programs can emphasize agricultural, food, and resource economics theory, research methods, and measurement of economic variables. Programs

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<sup>1</sup> The department chairperson may assign some of the duties described in this document to the associate chairperson.

can also emphasize the study of applied problems and the analysis of decision making by both private and public factors.

## **B. Overview of Graduate Programs**

1. Master's program. Two M.S. degrees in agricultural, food, and resource economics are offered: Plan A (minimum 30 credits with a 6-credit thesis and no second field), and Plan B (minimum 33 credits with a 3-credit research paper and a 6-credit second field). A final oral examination is required for both Plan A and Plan B programs.
2. Ph.D. program. The Ph.D. degree requires three fields: economic theory (courses in the Economics Department), a field in applied microeconomics (one required AFRE course), and a major field in agricultural, food, and resource economics (development economics, environmental and resource economics, or food and agricultural economics). Students also present a required research paper at a graduate research symposium, defend a research proposal, complete a dissertation, and defend it at a final oral examination.
3. [Interdepartmental Specialization in Environmental and Resource Economics](#). This specialization is available as an elective to students enrolled in a master's or doctoral program in one of several departments of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, including the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics. The specialization is administered by an interdepartmental coordinating committee of environmental and resource economics faculty from these departments. The requirements for this specialization involve completion of courses and, at the doctoral level, passing of a written qualifying examination. In most cases the course requirements for a master's or doctoral degree in agricultural, food, and resource economics can be met in a way that also satisfies the requirements for the resource economics specialization. Successful completion of the requirements for the specialization will be indicated by a notation on the student's transcript.

## **C. General Policies**

University and College policies and guidelines are an important part of the context within which our departmental policies are developed. Important references to these broader policy documents include the following:

1. *Academic Programs Catalog*  
<http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/>  
This document includes sections on:
  - Graduate Education
  - Graduate Study in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

2. *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR)*, available as part of the *Spartan Life Student Handbook and Resource Guide*.  
<https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/article-two-academic-rights-and-responsibilities-for-graduate-students.html>
3. *Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising*  
<https://grad.msu.edu/msu-guidelines-graduate-student-mentoring-advising>
4. *Research and Scholarly Integrity*  
 Graduate School resources: <http://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity/>  
 Research Integrity Officer: <https://rio.msu.edu/>
5. Student records include the academic file (grades, degree program forms, academic correspondence), the assistantship/fellowship file (appointment forms), and the “personnel file” (for students appointed as TAs under the terms of the GEU/MSU contract). Access to student records is governed by:
  - The provisions of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)
  - MSU’s *Student Privacy Rights*  
<http://www.reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/PrivacyGuidelines.asp>
6. *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Training*  
 As of Fall 2020, all students, faculty, and staff must complete MSU’s online DEI training. [Visit the Training page](#) from MSU’s Office of Regulatory Affairs for FAQs and the link to take the training in the Ability system, and watch for updates as this requirement evolves.
7. *Disability Accommodations for Graduate Assistants*  
 Graduate assistants (RAs, TAs, and TEs) are both students and employees. They are thus eligible for disability accommodations in both of these roles, and these accommodations are provided through distinct documents coordinated by the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD): Students receive VISAs (Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations) or VISTAs (Verified Individualized Services and Temporary Accommodations) and employees receive SEADs (Statements of Employee Accommodation Determination). Graduate assistants can register for both situations using [RCPD’s MyProfile portal](#).
8. *Offerings from the Office of the University Ombudsperson*  
 The MSU Ombudsperson office provides the following free services to units upon request.
  1. **Unit Climate Assessment:** The Ombuds office will help you conduct a confidential assessment of your unit’s climate.  
<https://ombud.msu.edu/education-training-assessments/assessments>

2. **Presentations & Trainings:** The Ombuds office will deliver presentations and trainings that cover common topics such as principles of academic integrity, conflict resolution, decision making, FERPA, the role of the Ombuds office, and custom topics. These offerings can be tailored for faculty & staff, students, and/or the classroom. <https://ombud.msu.edu/education-training-assessments/presentations-trainings>

### III. ADMISSIONS CRITERIA, REQUIREMENTS, AND PROCEDURES

#### A. Admissions Criteria

Admission to the graduate program is based on three main criteria:

1. Ability to complete the degree requirements successfully and in a reasonable time period. This is evaluated based on the entire application, including:
  - a. Record of previous academic training and performance (course program, grades, length of time to degree, and date of degree).
  - b. Academic and personal statements.
  - c. TOEFL and GRE scores.
  - d. Letters of recommendation.
  - e. Previous research or work experience that is relevant to the applicant's proposed area of interest.
2. Match between the applicant's background, interests, and educational objectives, and the Department's research, teaching, and outreach programs.
3. The applicant's contribution to the diversity and balance of the department's graduate student body.

Additional details on admissions criteria are available at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/afre/graduate/applying>.

#### B. Admissions Procedures

1. Students are admitted to enter the program in the Fall Semester. Admissions requests for the Spring and Summer Semesters are generally not granted because required core courses are sequential and begin only in the Fall Semester.

2. Students may apply directly to the master's program.
3. Students may enter the doctoral program in one of three ways:
  - a. Students who have obtained or expect to obtain a master's degree from another department or from another institution may apply for direct admission to the doctoral program.
  - b. Students who have obtained or expect to obtain a bachelor's degree with coursework that is sufficiently advanced may apply for direct admission to the doctoral program.
  - c. Students currently enrolled in the department's master's program may request a transfer to the doctoral program by submitting a transfer request form, signed by the major professor. This request requires approval of the department and the college. Transfer should be requested no earlier than the end of the first year of the student's program. A decision on the request may be postponed until later in the student's second year in order to obtain additional information bearing on the student's likelihood of success in the doctoral program.
4. Provisional admission:
  - a. Students who lack preparation in a particular area but who are otherwise admissible may be admitted provisionally. Necessary remedial work and deadlines for completing it will be stated in the admissions letter. Regular status will be granted when the provisions have been completed.

#### IV. ADVISING

Graduate students receive academic advising from a guidance committee of faculty members, including a major professor and (if the student so chooses) a research supervisor other than the major professor.

##### A. Eligibility of Faculty for Advising

1. Graduate student advising is normally the responsibility of "regular faculty" members. As defined in the [Faculty Handbook](#) (p. 9), at Michigan State University, "The 'regular faculty' shall consist of all persons appointed under the rules of tenure and holding the rank of professor, associate professor or assistant professor and all persons appointed as librarians."
2. Others who may serve in an advising role include the following:

- a. An emeritus or non-tenure system faculty member may serve:
  - on a particular graduate student's guidance committee or M.S. oral examination committee as a committee member, or
  - as the chairperson (major professor) of the student's guidance or examination committee, or
  - as the thesis or dissertation advisor.

For emeritus and non-tenure system faculty, approval is required by the department chairperson. For non-tenure system faculty, approval by the college and the Dean of the Graduate School is also required, following the procedures at <https://grad.msu.edu/graduate-school-approved-faculty-committees>.

Non-tenure system faculty members who have been so approved may serve on a guidance committee or as a voting member of the examination committee so long as the number of AFRE tenure system committee members is equal to or exceeds the number of non-tenure system committee members and the AFRE guidance committee composition requirements in section IV.C are met. See <http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.asp?Section=111#s394> and <https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Print.aspx?Section=381> for guidance committee requirements per the MSU Academic Programs Catalog.

- b. An MSU faculty member who has been advising a student may continue in that role after leaving MSU for other employment, with the approval of the department, college, and Dean of the Graduate School. See <https://grad.msu.edu/graduate-school-approved-faculty-committees> for details.
- c. Persons from other institutions may serve only as nonvoting members of the guidance or examination committee unless they have been approved by the department, college, and Dean of the Graduate School using the same procedure applied to non-tenure system MSU faculty members. See <https://grad.msu.edu/graduate-school-approved-faculty-committees> for details. If so approved, persons from other institutions may serve on a guidance committee or as a voting member of the examination committee so long as the AFRE guidance committee composition requirements in section IV.C are met.

## **B. Major Professor**

1. New students are assigned a temporary major professor by the department's Graduate Program Director. A student may request a specific temporary major professor.
2. The student is responsible for selecting a permanent major professor. The student's selection of a major professor is subject to approval by the Graduate Program



Director. If necessary, the student may request the Graduate Program Director to assist in identifying a suitable major professor.

3. As outlined more fully in the *Guidelines on Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising*, the major professor's role is to advise the student on developing a program plan, selecting a research topic and implementing and publishing the research, and developing professional skills. The major professor should provide intellectual support and guidance to the student, give regular feedback to the student on their academic progress, and facilitate the student's career development.
4. A major professor who is unable or unwilling to continue in that role may resign. The student then selects a new major professor as soon as possible, subject to approval by the Graduate Program Director. When feasible, the major professor who is unable to continue will assist the student in identifying a suitable replacement.
5. A major professor who is temporarily unable to serve in that role should, in consultation with the student, designate another person to act as major professor during the period, and notify the student and the Graduate Program Director accordingly.
6. A student whose educational objectives change may request a different major professor, subject to approval by the Graduate Program Director.

### C. **Guidance Committee**

1. The guidance committee must be selected by the student, in consultation with the major professor.
  - a. For a master's student, the guidance committee consists of three or more Michigan State University regular faculty members. A majority of the guidance committee members must have appointments in the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics. The guidance committee is responsible for grading the student's final oral examination.
  - b. For a Ph.D. student, the guidance committee consists of four or more Michigan State University regular faculty members. A majority of the guidance committee members must have appointments in the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics.
  - c. The student may change the guidance committee at a later time, subject to approval by the Graduate Program Director.

- d. While the majority of the student's guidance committee must have appointments in the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, students are encouraged to seek members from outside the Department when such members can offer special expertise relevant to their programs.
2. As outlined more fully in the *Guidelines on Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising* the guidance committee including the major professor counsels the student in the development of career objectives and a relevant program of study consistent with the individual's career objectives, periodically assesses the student's progress and performance, and determines if the student has met the standards for the degree. Many students desire and could benefit from teaching, extension activities, or research responsibilities, in addition to their thesis or dissertation research. The guidance committee is responsible for encouraging or requiring such experience commensurate with the student's interests and professional goals.

#### **D. Research or Dissertation Supervisor**

1. The candidate and major professor may designate another faculty member to act as research supervisor (M.S. program) or dissertation supervisor (Ph.D. program), subject to approval by the department chairperson. The research or dissertation supervisor becomes a member of the guidance committee. Other faculty members may be added to the guidance committee, or the guidance committee may be reconstituted, for purposes of guiding and evaluating the student's research.
2. The research/dissertation supervisor, if one is designated, will have primary responsibility for advising the student during the development of the M.S. Plan B paper or thesis or Ph.D. dissertation. Otherwise, the major professor will fulfill this responsibility. Advice should be given on problem definition, data collection methods, analytic content, and structure and style of the final product. Where special help is needed, the research/dissertation supervisor or major professor should suggest how it can be obtained. They should also clarify with the student any specific needs for reports and appropriate journal articles, as well as authorship of, and responsibility for, joint publications.

#### **E. Professional Development**

The major professor and guidance committee members should encourage and assist the student to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the classroom, and to develop professional skills that are important for a career in agricultural economics. Attendance at seminars and research proposal or thesis/dissertation presentations and participation at professional meetings provide important opportunities for learning about current research or policy issues and methods of analysis, for sharpening critical thinking, and for developing a network of acquaintances who can serve as future

colleagues. Students are therefore expected to participate regularly in such learning experiences. In addition, the student's advisors should assist in creating opportunities for the student to develop writing, speaking, presentation and computer skills, and other skills and experiences that would contribute to effective teaching, if that is relevant to the student's intended career. Students are expected to be active in pursuing such skill-building opportunities. For many students, professional development opportunities may include travel abroad. Students traveling abroad are encouraged to use the following MSU resources:

- a. The MSU Travel Clinic can advise on health risks or recommended immunizations. <http://www.travelclinic.msu.edu/>
- b. The International Studies and Programs website provides information related to safety around the world. <https://www.isp.msu.edu/information-resources/international-travel/>
- c. Assistance with travel funding may be available via the Graduate School.

Students are also encouraged to take advantage of career and professional development resources available from the MSU Graduate School. A description of these resources is available at: <https://grad.msu.edu/career-development>

#### **F. Student Responsibilities**

The responsibility of faculty to adhere to university and department policies and to provide effective advising and mentoring of graduate students is accompanied by a set of responsibilities incumbent on students. As outlined more fully in the *Guidelines on Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising* and in the [GSRR](#), the responsibilities of students that contribute to good student-advisor relationships include learning and adhering to university and department policies, following principles of honesty, integrity, and collegial behavior during course work, research and publication-related activities, and keeping the major professor and guidance committee regularly informed of progress toward degree completion.

## V. MASTER'S PROGRAM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

### A. Introduction

1. The M.S. degree program in agricultural, food, and resource economics reflects recognition that the background and post-degree plans of students vary widely. Despite this, all students are expected to obtain sufficient economic theory, mathematics and statistics to interpret economic data effectively and to obtain practical research results for themselves and others. They are also expected to develop a general familiarity with the content, approaches and historical development of agricultural economics and its supporting disciplines. The requirements of the M.S. degree are summarized in Table 1.
2. Students who plan to acquire a Ph.D. degree should develop the M.S. program as an integral part of their total graduate program. This is particularly important in areas of study where substantial prerequisites are required.

### B. Course Program

1. Two broad programs are offered under the designations of Plan A and Plan B. The student is responsible for filing a major professor, guidance committee, and Plan A or Plan B course program via GradPlan (<https://student.msu.edu>) no later than the end of their second semester in the program. These requests must be approved by the guidance committee, Graduate Program Director, and college dean. The program may be modified later to respond to changing academic opportunities or career interests.
2. AFRE 801, AFRE 802 and AFRE 805 are required.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a minimum of 12 other course credits in agricultural economics, with at least 9 at the 800-900 level, is required under both Plan A and Plan B (Table 1).
3. A second field of 6 course credits is designated for Plan B. This field is normally outside the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics and is in addition to minimum credit requirements in economics.

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<sup>2</sup>Whenever a course number is specified, it is understood that the phrase "or equivalent" applies, including a higher-level course on the same material.

**Table 1: MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR M.S. PROGRAM**

Course Requirements a/	Semester Credits	
	Plan A	Plan B
<b>Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics Field</b>		
AFRE 800/900-level courses other than AFRE 801 & AFRE 805	9	9
Elective b/	3	3
<b>Second Field</b> (in or outside AFRE)	0	6
<b>Economics</b> (AFRE 805 or EC 812A)	3	3
<b>Quantitative Methods</b>		
Statistics (AFRE 802)	3	3
Mathematics for economists (AFRE 801)	3	3
Elective quantitative methods course, as approved by the guidance committee and department	3	3
<b>Research:</b> Thesis for Plan A (AFRE 899); research, case study, or problem-solving project paper for Plan B (AFRE 898)	6	3
<b>Total Credits</b>	30	33

**Other Requirements:**

- Minimum GPA of 3.0 in the student's approved course program, and 3.0 grades in each required quantitative methods course
- Minimum of 18 credits (excluding research) in courses at the 800 or 900-level
- Final oral examination
- Completion of RCR requirements

a/ Whenever a course number is specified it is understood that the phrase "or equivalent" applies, including a higher-level course on the same material.

b/ Including suitable 400-level ABM, EEM, or FIM courses or courses in other departments as approved by the guidance committee and the department.

5. A minimum of 30 credits including research (33 credits if Plan B) with a grade point average of at least 3.0 is required. University regulations generally do not permit counting 300-level courses. The guidance committee may require collateral courses that are not included in the minimum credits or in the grade point average. A maximum of 9 semester credits of graduate course work (excluding research and thesis credits) may be transferred from courses taken at another institution, or in another master's degree program at Michigan State University.
6. A minimum of 18 credits (excluding research credits) must be in courses at the 800 or 900 level.
7. A minimum of 9 credits in quantitative methods courses, consisting of 3 credits of mathematics for economists (AFRE 801), 3 credits of mathematical statistics for applied economics (AFRE 802), and one elective 3-credit quantitative methods course.
8. The student demonstrates competence in quantitative methods by achieving at least a 3.0 grade in each of the courses taken to satisfy the three quantitative methods requirements.
9. A maximum of 3 credits of AFRE 890 (Independent Study) may be used toward fulfillment of the Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics field (for Plan A and Plan B students) or the second field (for Plan B students).

### **C. Research**

1. The research requirement depends on the choice of Plan A or Plan B option.
  - a. Plan A requires a thesis, based on 6 credits of research earned in AFRE 899. This option is appropriate for students who wish to emphasize research experience during the M.S. program.
  - b. Plan B requires a research paper, based on 3 credits of research earned in AFRE 898. This option is appropriate for students who wish to emphasize course work during the M.S. program.
  - c. The guidance committee has latitude in determining what constitutes a Plan A thesis or Plan B research paper. In general, a thesis will make an original contribution to the field and is likely to involve analysis of primary data, perhaps collected by the student. A Plan B paper may take many forms, including a case study of a firm or industry, or a literature review and research proposal, and is more likely to involve analysis of secondary data.

2. Plan A and Plan B students must complete RCR requirements (Appendix D), and all students must ensure that they comply with the university requirements and guidelines pertaining to use of human subjects and vertebrate animals in research, and to safe use of hazardous materials.
  - a. Students whose master's Plan A or Plan B research will involve human subjects will need to apply online (<https://hrpp.msu.edu/>) to obtain prior approval from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Examples of research involving human subjects include interviews, surveys, behavioral or educational testing, observation of individual or group behavior, or the use of existing data on human subjects, including publicly available data. In most cases, research based on primary or secondary survey data whose collection had the consent of those surveyed and did not place them under any risk, and whose use does not reveal their identities, will receive quick and favorable review. The IRB office should be contacted for more specific information about review procedures and the types of research requiring review.
  - b. Students whose research involves vertebrate animals should adhere to the guidelines of the Animal Care Program (<https://animalcare.msu.edu>).
  - c. Guidelines for protection of the environment and regulatory compliance are available from the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (<https://ehs.msu.edu/lab-clinic/index.html>).

#### **D. Final Oral Examination**

1. The M.S. student's guidance committee is also the student's final oral examination committee. The candidate is expected to provide members of the examination committee with a copy of the thesis or Plan B paper at least two weeks before the oral examination. The defense should be announced to all faculty and graduate students at least a week in advance by the Academic Program Coordinator. The student must be registered for a minimum of one credit in the semester in which the final oral examination is taken (except for in summer).
2. The oral examination should be scheduled so that all members of the examination committee may attend. If necessary, other modes of faculty participation such as through conference telephone call or written questions and comments may be adopted with the approval of the department chairperson. If travel to participate in the defense represents a significant hardship for the student, the student may petition the examination committee and department chair for a remote defense.

Approved remote defenses are subject to the following conditions:

- i. The student must present a seminar that is viewable (either recorded or in person) by the examination committee and other people on the MSU campus.
  - ii. The student must be interactively examined.
  - iii. Logistical arrangements for the defense are the responsibility of the student and committee.
3. The oral examination is a comprehensive evaluation of the candidate's qualifications for the M.S. degree. At the discretion of the major professor, the examination committee may give a written examination in addition to the oral. Since master's programs vary markedly, the oral examination will vary, but in each case the examination will attempt to determine if the student has achieved a minimum level of competence in the general area of agricultural, food and resource economics and a comprehensive knowledge of the major area of emphasis. The examination will normally begin with a public presentation by the student of their thesis or Plan B paper, but the examination is not limited to a defense of the thesis or the Plan B paper. Consistent with College policy, interested faculty members not on the examination committee may participate without vote during the examination that follows any public presentation of the student's research. Graduate students may not attend this examination, however.
4. A majority vote to pass is sufficient for successful completion of the examination requirement for a Plan A or Plan B master's degree. In the event of a tie vote, the department chairperson will arrange for another assessment to break the tie. If the student is required to make revisions in the thesis or Plan B paper, the faculty member designated by the examination committee to review the revised work is expected to do so in a timely manner, normally within four weeks following the date the revised work is delivered to the faculty member. If the student does not receive a response within four weeks, the student should contact the faculty member or major professor, and if necessary, may request assistance from the department chairperson in obtaining a timely decision on the acceptability of the proposed revisions.
5. The examination committee also evaluates the candidate's potential for performance in a Ph.D. program. The major professor is responsible for transmitting this recommendation to the department chairperson.

**E. Preparation and Submission of Final Research Paper or Thesis**

1. The document should be prepared using the master's thesis formatting guidelines prescribed by the Graduate School (<http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>).
2. The research supervisor must approve the final version of the document. For Plan A theses, an electronic copy of the document must be submitted to the Graduate School via ProQuest (<https://grad.msu.edu/etd/Electronic-Submission-to-ProQuest>). An electronic copy of the document approved by the Graduate School must also be submitted to the Academic Program Coordinator before the degree will be certified.



Plan B papers are not collected by the University or Graduate School; however, an electronic copy of the document must be submitted to the Academic Program Coordinator before the degree will be certified. The student should also provide copies to the major professor, the research supervisor (if different from the major professor), and any other members of the guidance committee indicated by the major professor.

3. The student is responsible for submitting all required forms to the Graduate School and the department.

#### **F. Recognition of Outstanding M.S. Thesis/Plan B Research Paper**

Each year the Department selects the outstanding M.S. thesis or Plan B research paper and recognizes the student's research efforts by placing their name on a plaque displayed in the department. In addition, the student honored will receive a monetary award of at least \$250, the amount to be adjusted periodically by the department on the recommendation of the Graduate Policy Committee.

## **VI. PH.D. PROGRAM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Introduction**

1. University regulations require students to be in residence on campus for two consecutive semesters after first enrollment for doctoral degree credit. Students must complete at least six credits of graduate work in each of the two resident semesters. Students must also register for and successfully complete 24 credits of doctoral dissertation research (AFRE 999). The requirements of the Ph.D. degree are summarized in Table 2.
2. Students who enter the master's program in agricultural, food, and resource economics and who subsequently transfer to the doctoral program have the option to complete or discontinue the master's degree in agricultural, food, and resource economics. For students that opt to complete the master's degree, subject to approval of the student's guidance committee and with explicit acknowledgment, selected material from the M.S. thesis or Plan B paper may be incorporated into the dissertation. All requirements for the master's degree must be met.
3. Prior research experience is helpful in preparing a doctoral student to complete the dissertation successfully. Students entering the doctoral program without having completed a master's thesis, research paper, or equivalent, will be encouraged to identify, in consultation with their guidance committee, ways of obtaining appropriate research experience prior to beginning their doctoral dissertation research.

**Table 2. Minimum Requirements for Ph.D. Program**

<b>Course Requirements a/</b>	<b>Semester Credits</b>
Microeconomic theory (EC 812A and 812B)	7
Econometrics (EC 820A and 820B)	6
Applied microeconomics (AFRE 900) <sup>3</sup>	3
Major field in agricultural, food, and resource economics b/	9
Advanced course requirement (at least 6 credits must be AFRE 800 or 900 level courses)	12
Dissertation research (AFRE 999)	24
<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>61</b>

**Other Requirements:**

- A 3.5 or greater in at least two of the five following EC and AFRE core courses: EC 812A, EC 812B, EC 820A, EC 820B, and AFRE 900, with a 3.0 minimum also required in each of these courses
- Successful completion of a research paper/comprehensive exam requirement
- Completion of seminar requirement
- Presentation and successful defense of the research proposal
- Presentation and successful defense of the dissertation at the final oral examination
- Completion of RCR requirements

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a/ Where a specific course is listed, the phrase “or equivalent” applies, including a higher-level course on the same material.

b/ Including at least one 900-level course.

**B. Course Program**

1. The student is responsible for filing a major professor, guidance committee, and course program via GradPlan (<https://student.msu.edu>) no later than the end of their second year in the program. These requests must be approved by the guidance committee, Graduate Program Director, and college dean. The program may be

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<sup>3</sup> AFRE 900 was referred to as AFRE 900B prior to the discontinuation of AFRE 900A.

modified later to respond to changing academic opportunities or career interests. Prior to filing a course program, only 800 & 900 level courses completed by the student will be included in computations of GPA used to determine academic standing.

2. A grade point average of 3.0 in the student's approved course program is required before the student can be certified for graduation. Collateral courses are not included in this calculation.
3. Up to 9 graduate credits may be transferred from other accredited institutions of similar quality if they are appropriate to a student's program. Only graduate-level courses in which a 3.0 (B) grade was received will be considered for transfer, except in the case of dual degree programs involving the College of Law, where grades of 2.0 are accepted.
4. Course work is organized around four required fields and an advanced course requirement. The four fields are microeconomic theory, econometrics, applied microeconomics, and a major field in agricultural, food, and resource economics. The advanced requirement consists of 12 credits, with at least 6 credits being AFRE 800 or 900 level courses. The same course may not be used to meet more than one of these requirements.
5. The microeconomic theory field is intended to provide Ph.D.-level training via EC 812A and EC 812B, which must be taken in the first academic year of doctoral study. Students demonstrate competence in microeconomic theory through qualifying grade requirements (see VI.C below).
6. The econometrics field consists of EC 820A and EC 820B, which must be taken in the first academic year of doctoral study. Students demonstrate competence in econometrics through qualifying grade requirements (see VI.C below).
7. The field in applied microeconomics consists of AFRE 900 (3 credits total), which must be taken no later than the Fall semester of the second academic year of doctoral study. Students demonstrate competence in applied microeconomics through qualifying grade requirements (see VI.C below).
8. The major field in agricultural, food, and resource economics provides a specialization within agricultural, food, and resource economics, normally related to the student's probable dissertation area. A minimum of 9 credits is required. The available fields are:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For details on relevant courses and course requirements in each field, see the Department web pages on Ph.D. fields at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/afre/graduate/Ph.D.-Degree/>.

- a. Development Economics
  - b. Environmental and Resource Economics
  - c. Food and Agricultural Economics
9. The advanced course requirement is to assure a broad foundation of knowledge. A minimum of 6 of the 12 credits must be AFRE 800 or 900 level courses. A maximum of 3 credits of AFRE 890 (Independent Study) may be used toward fulfillment of the advanced course requirement.
  10. Additional courses may be required by the guidance committee, particularly to remedy deficiencies or to assure the student's competence in view of career objectives relative to previous academic study and work or other learning experiences.

### **C. Qualifying Requirements**

1. To be qualified to proceed in the AFRE Ph.D. program, grades of 3.5 or greater are required in at least two of the following five EC and AFRE core courses: EC 812A, EC 812B, EC 820A, EC 820B, and AFRE 900, with a 3.0 minimum also required in each of these courses. Retaking a course to meet these requirements is not allowed.
2. AFRE Ph.D. students pursuing a doctoral dual major with Economics must take the Economics Qualifying Examinations in microeconomics, econometrics, and macroeconomics all in the first academic year of doctoral study. AFRE dual major students who pass these qualifying examinations will be qualified in AFRE.

### **D. Full Time Status**

1. In order for a doctoral student to be considered full-time for academic purposes, they must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits (pre-comprehensive exam).
2. Full-time status for doctoral students is defined as a minimum of 1 credit for those students who:
  - a. Have successfully completed all comprehensive exams and are actively engaged in dissertation research; or
  - b. Are doing department-approved off-campus fieldwork related to preparation of their dissertation. This off-campus fieldwork will be granted for one semester at a time up to a maximum of three semesters. The dean's office of the student's college will request the change of status by the Office of the

Registrar at least one month prior to the beginning of the semester for which the status is requested.

3. All graduate assistants are classified as full-time students during the semester(s) of their appointments, as long as they are enrolled in the minimum required credits for the assistantship.
  - a. For a quarter-time, half-time, and three-quarter-time graduate assistantship, minimum enrollment is 3 credits for doctoral students (pre-comprehensive exam).
  - b. Minimum enrollment for doctoral students who have successfully completed all comprehensive exams is 1 credit.

#### **E. Research Paper and Comprehensive Exam Requirement**

1. As part of their comprehensive exam requirement, students must produce a paper that demonstrates original research based on a sound synthesis and critical assessment of the state of economic research in a particular area. The original research component, which must go beyond a literature review, should be sufficiently well-developed that, with reasonable revisions, it would result in a publishable paper. The paper is encouraged to be used subsequently as a dissertation chapter. Accordingly, the rules of co-authorship for dissertation chapters apply.
2. The research paper is evaluated by a Research Paper Committee comprised of at least three AFRE faculty members, one of whom is appointed by the Graduate Program Director. Additional members may be added, including qualified faculty with appointments outside AFRE. However, the number of non-AFRE members cannot exceed the number of AFRE members.
3. Students are required to present the paper at an AFRE graduate research symposium organized in Spring Semester by the Graduate Program Director. Students must submit their written paper to all committee members, with a copy to the Academic Program Coordinator, at least two weeks prior to the date of the graduate research symposium.
4. Research Paper Committee members must provide feedback to the student, including any required revisions to the paper, within one week after presentation at the graduate research symposium. Students must complete any required revisions by the end of the semester the paper was presented.

5. A student's performance on both the written paper (including revisions, if required) and paper presentation constitutes their comprehensive exam for the Ph.D. program. The comprehensive exam is graded by the student's Research Paper Committee. Based on a majority vote with at most one dissenting member, the student receives a pass/fail grade on the comprehensive exam. A fail means the student is no longer in good academic standing.
6. When the student has completed their comprehensive exam, the student's major professor reports the results (pass or fail) by submitting a Record of Comprehensive Examination form to the Academic Program Coordinator.
7. If the comprehensive exam is failed, a second attempt can be arranged by the student and the student's Research Paper Committee in consultation with the Graduate Program Director. A maximum of two attempts is allowed for the comprehensive exam.
8. Students must complete their comprehensive exam by the end of the spring semester of their third year.

#### **F. Seminar Requirement**

1. Students must attend at least 6 AFRE (or joint with AFRE) seminars during a single academic year before the end of their fourth year in the Ph.D. program. For the AFRE seminar requirement, students complete an internal form, housed in D2L, to indicate which seminars were attended. There is no coursework or enrollment required as part of the AFRE seminar requirement.

#### **G. Research Proposal Requirement**

1. Each Ph.D. candidate is required to circulate a written dissertation research proposal and to present a department seminar on the proposed research at an early stage in the research process. The principal purpose is to help gain feedback from the guidance committee, other faculty and graduate students, and to ensure that the proposed research problem and methodology are appropriately specified. The candidate must be physically present at a location on the MSU campus for the proposal seminar; remote presentation of proposals is not allowed. The student should submit the written research proposal to guidance committee members at least two weeks prior to presenting the proposal.
2. Following the seminar, the research proposal must be approved by majority vote of the guidance committee. If the proposal is not approved, the student must present a revised proposal, also for approval by majority vote. A maximum of two tries is allowed, and approval must be obtained before the end of the student's fourth academic year. The major professor should report the guidance committee's

evaluation of the proposed research by submitting a completed copy of the Ph.D. Research Proposal and Seminar Report Form to the Academic Program Coordinator.

## **H. Doctoral Dissertation**

1. A doctoral dissertation that is based on original research which makes a significant contribution to knowledge is required for the degree. By University regulation, each student must register for a minimum of 24 credits and no more than 36 credits of AFRE 999 Doctoral Dissertation Research prior to awarding of the degree. The guidance committee and student have wide latitude in determining the design and format of the dissertation, but in any case, the dissertation should be designed so as to facilitate publication of the results. A common alternative to the traditional dissertation is a set of three related essays written in journal article format and combined in one volume with an introduction and concluding chapter that highlight the essays' common research focus and principal findings.
2. Essays that the student has co-authored while in the doctoral program may be included provided the major professor certifies that the student is the Lead author (i.e., senior author) as defined in the Michigan State University Guidelines on Authorship: "The Lead author is defined as the person who leads a research/scholarly effort or creative work and makes a major contribution to a multi-authored work" (<https://research.msu.edu/michigan-state-university-guidelines-authorship>). If the essay has been submitted for publication elsewhere, the authors should be listed in the order on the submitted document.
3. Students reprinting previously published copyrighted material, wholly or in part, must follow MSU thesis and dissertation guidelines (<https://grad.msu.edu/etd/copyright-information>).
4. Students must complete Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) requirements (see Appendix D) and ensure that they comply with the university requirements and guidelines pertaining to research involving human subjects, vertebrate animals, and environmental health and safety (see section V.C.2).

## **I. Final Oral Examination**

1. Upon completion of the dissertation research, the major professor schedules and chairs a two-hour final oral examination for the student's defense of the dissertation. This dissertation defense should be announced to all faculty and graduate students at least a week in advance by the Academic Program Coordinator.
  - a. The examination should be scheduled to permit attendance of all guidance committee members. If a member other than the major professor or the dissertation supervisor cannot attend the examination, other modes of faculty

participation such as through conference telephone call or written questions and comments may be adopted with the approval of the department chairperson. A minimum of four approved graduate faculty members of the guidance committee must attend the examination. If travel to participate in the defense represents a significant hardship for the student, the student may petition the examination committee and department chair for a remote defense. Approved remote defenses are subject to the following conditions:

- i. The student must present a seminar that is viewable (either recorded or in person) by the examination committee and other people on the MSU campus.
  - ii. The student must be interactively examined.
  - iii. Logistical arrangements for the defense are the responsibility of the student and committee.
- b. The final oral examination cannot be conducted before the dissertation is in final draft form. The student should submit the draft dissertation to guidance committee members at least two weeks prior to the examination date. The student must be registered for a minimum of one credit during the semester in which the final oral examination is taken.
- c. **Research Presentation Requirement.** Each candidate is required to make a twenty- to thirty-minute presentation of their research prior to the normal two-hour period of the final oral examination. The research presentation is open to all. Only Ph.D. guidance committee members may attend the subsequent oral examination.
2. On the basis of the dissertation and the student's defense of it, the guidance committee either approves or rejects the dissertation. Approval may be subject to conditions. A three-fourths majority vote of the voting examiners, with not more than one dissenting vote from among the Michigan State University regular faculty members of the guidance committee, is sufficient to approve the dissertation and pass the candidate. The candidate may be passed subject to additional work that must be approved by one or more members of the examination committee and the major professor. If the student is required to make revisions in the dissertation, the faculty member designated by the examination committee to review the revised work is expected to do so in a timely manner, normally within four weeks following the date the revised work is delivered to the faculty member. If the student does not receive a response within four weeks, the student should contact the faculty member or major professor, and if necessary, may request assistance from the department chairperson in obtaining a timely decision on the acceptability of the proposed revisions.

## J. Preparation and Submission of Final Dissertation



1. The dissertation must be prepared according to the formatting guidelines prescribed by the Graduate School (<https://grad.msu.edu/etd/formatting-guide>).
2. The dissertation supervisor must approve the final version of the document. An electronic copy of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School via ProQuest (<https://grad.msu.edu/etd/Electronic-Submission-to-ProQuest>). An electronic copy of the dissertation approved by the Graduate School must also be submitted to the Academic Program Coordinator before the degree will be certified. The student should also provide copies to the major professor, the dissertation supervisor (if different from the major professor) and any other members of the guidance committee indicated by the major professor.
3. The student is responsible for submitting all required forms to the Graduate School and the department.

#### **K. Recognition of Outstanding Ph.D. Dissertation**

Each year the Department selects the outstanding Ph.D. dissertation. The student's recognition and monetary award are the same as for the author of the outstanding M.S. thesis or Plan B research paper (see section V.F).

### **VII. DEPARTMENT POLICIES: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

#### **A. Introduction**

Careful screening during the admissions process results in selection of students who are well prepared for the program. The faculty and department staff strive to support them and facilitate their success in every way possible. Consequently, only a small number of students encounter significant academic difficulty. At the same time, the integrity of the program and the rights of the student require clear and equitable criteria and procedures for evaluating academic performance. These criteria and procedures are set forth in the rest of section VII.

#### **B. Grades**

1. Following university policy, a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in the student's approved course program is required. A grade of 3.0 or better is required in each course used to satisfy the minimum quantitative methods requirements for the M.S. program (see V.B.9). A grade of 3.0 or better is also required in each course used to establish a Ph.D. student's major field and the student's cumulative GPA for their major field courses must be greater than 3.0.

2. Department and college approval is required to repeat any course in which a grade of 2.0 or 2.5 is earned. When a course is repeated, the last grade replaces the previous grade in computing grade point averages. A course may be repeated only once.
3. A student may have no more than two deferred course grades (identified as DF-Deferred) outstanding at any one time, other than for research credits (AFRE 898, 899, and 999).
4. **DF-Deferred grades: The required work must be completed and a grade reported within 6 months with the option of a single six-month extension.** If the required work is not completed within the time limit, the DF will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to DF/U under the numerical and Pass-No Grade (P-N) grading systems, and to DF/NC under the Credit-No Credit (CR-NC) system. This rule does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.

### C. Academic Progress: Review Procedures and Criteria

1. All graduate students are entitled to evaluation of their academic progress, performance, and professional potential (GSRR 2.4.8). Regular meetings of students with their guidance committees are encouraged as a constructive and effective means of providing this information, and of addressing any concerns which the student may have.
2. A formal annual review of all graduate students will also be conducted. The procedures for this review are as follows:
  - a. Each student should meet with their major professor and assistantship supervisor to discuss progress, achievements, concerns, and plans for the future. For students with assistantship appointments, the relationship between the student's assistantship assignment and academic program should be discussed. Among other information, the review will take into account the following indicators of student progress:
    - grade point average
    - course load
    - number of deferred courses
    - program completion progress (see section C.4 below)
  - b. The results of the review, including comments from both the student and faculty members involved, must be recorded on the appropriate form and submitted to the Academic Program Coordinator by April 15. The Graduate Program Director may discuss the results of the review with the student's major professor and assistantship supervisor in order to reach a joint agreement on the assessment.
  - c. The results of the review will be uploaded into the Student Information System (student.msu.edu), in which the student and faculty member will have access to the forms. If the student wishes to challenge the results of the review, they may send the challenge in writing to the Graduate Program Director, for inclusion in the student's educational record. Students have the right to inspect their own educational records (GSRR 3.2.3).
3. The academic progress and performance of a student may also be evaluated at other times of the year, e.g., following completion of the qualifying course sequence.
4. Detailed program timetables and progress milestones for both master's and doctoral students are contained in Annex A. University time limits are contained in the Academic Programs Catalog at the following links:  
(<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=386> and <https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=406>). The

Department's progress milestones are intended to encourage timely degree completion by students, and to permit clear and equitable evaluation of students' academic progress.

5. Unsatisfactory Academic Progress:

a. Unsatisfactory progress, which leads to the loss of Good Academic Standing, falls into two categories:

1) Category 1: Grades. When grade deficiencies arise, the student will be given a written warning by the department chairperson in which the condition(s) and the time period for resolving the deficiencies are spelled out. If the conditions are not met within the specified time period, the student will receive an evaluation of unsatisfactory academic progress. An illustrative but not exhaustive list of academic difficulties of this type follows:

- a) The student's cumulative grade point average in their approved course program falls below 3.0. The student will be given two semesters in which to bring their GPA up to 3.0.
- b) The student needs to retake a course, either because a grade below 2.0 was earned, or because a grade below 3.0 was earned on a course used to satisfy the quantitative methods requirements. The student will be given an appropriate period, based on course scheduling, in which to retake the course.
- c) The student accumulates three deferred (DF) course grades. The student will be required to convert the deferred grades to satisfactory numerical grades (2.0 for graduate credit; 3.0 for the specified courses in mathematics, statistics, and econometrics) within an appropriate period, normally one semester, based on instructor or course availability.

2) Category 2: Timeliness. Students must satisfy particular requirements within a given time period. Students are responsible for knowing these requirements and how to meet them. No warning letters will be sent to students who fail to meet such a requirement on the first try, or who delay action to the point that a second try cannot be completed within the stipulated deadline. The academic difficulties indicated below will lead directly to an evaluation of unsatisfactory academic progress.

- a) A doctoral student does not meet the qualifying requirements (VI.C) by the end of the fall semester of their second academic year .

- b) A doctoral student does not succeed in passing the research paper requirement (comprehensive exam) by the end of spring semester of the third academic year.
- c) A doctoral student does not succeed in obtaining a GPA greater than 3.0 in their major field courses prior to the beginning of their fourth academic year, with a limit of two attempted fields.
- d) A doctoral student does not obtain approval for their research proposal before the end of summer semester of the fourth academic year in the Ph.D. program, with a limit of two tries.

Time spent during approved leaves of absence (e.g., military service, family obligations, financial difficulties, serious medical conditions, or to accept professionally related employment for an extended period away from the university) will not be counted when evaluating academic progress. Deadlines may also be reasonably extended if the student has an approved part-time plan of study. University time limits continue to apply. Decisions regarding leaves of absence and part-time plans of study shall be made by the department chairperson after consultation with the student's guidance committee. A written record of any approved adjustments to a student's academic progress timetable will be placed in the student's academic file.

- b. Students whose academic progress is unsatisfactory will be reviewed by the department chairperson, in consultation with the student's guidance committee.<sup>5</sup> This review will have one of two possible outcomes:
  - 1) Unless special circumstances are sufficient to justify continuation, the student's program will be terminated. Special circumstances include serious medical conditions, pregnancy, or extraordinary situations outside the student's control, that directly and adversely affect academic performance.
  - 2) If special circumstances are sufficient to provide a legitimate explanation for the student's unsatisfactory performance, and if there is a reasonable prospect that the student will regain a satisfactory level of academic performance, the student will be given a written notice of condition(s) to meet and a time period in which to meet them. The student's unsatisfactory progress evaluation will remain in force and, in accordance with MSU graduate program academic policies, the student will be ineligible for

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<sup>5</sup>In the case of a student who has petitioned the Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) for permission to take a comprehensive examination a third time, the review will be conducted by the GPC.

departmental assistantship or fellowship support during this period. Successful completion of these conditions will restore the student's good academic standing and eligibility for departmental assistantship or fellowship support. Failure to meet these conditions will result in termination of the student's program without further review.

6. Dismissal from the Program. While such cases are expected to be infrequent, a student with unsatisfactory academic performance or progress may be dismissed from the program at the end of any semester, based on the procedures discussed in section 5 above. In the event of a dismissal, the department chairperson will notify the student, the student's major professor, and the dean of the college. A student who is dismissed from the doctoral program will have the option of switching to the master's program. In such cases, the department chairperson will inform the student in writing of the time period in which the master's degree requirements must be completed.

#### **D. Appeal Process**

As noted in section I, under extremely unusual circumstances a student or a guidance committee may petition the Graduate Policy Committee of the department for a waiver or modification of these policies for the specific student, subject to approval by the department chairperson. Students may also follow the grievance procedure specified in section IX below and further elaborated in section 5.3 of the [GSRR](#).

### **VIII. DEPARTMENT POLICIES: RESEARCH INTEGRITY**

- A. Per the Graduate School, "Research integrity is foundational to our scholarship, creative work, and core identity as MSU Spartans. It is not only required by rules (including federal, state, research sponsors, and MSU's [research](#) and [training](#) policies), integrity is essential for our research to have legitimacy and impact. Research integrity is so important to our development as scholars and creators that the Graduate School has developed minimum requirements for all graduate students regarding the Responsible Conduct of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (RCRSA, RCR for short). The Graduate School's RCRSA program requires (a) initial, basic education, and (b) supplemental, refresher training" (<https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>).
- B. In Annex D, you will find the RCR requirements that were adopted for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics. Please follow these guidelines as you progress through your RCR requirements.

### **IX. DEPARTMENT POLICIES: STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

- A. The [GSRR](#) (1.2) notes that graduate students have both rights and responsibilities. Rights include the right to learn. Responsibilities include the responsibility to refrain from interfering with the rights of others, harassing other students, faculty or staff, or misusing department resources.
- B. Students share with faculty the responsibility to maintain an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning, to maintain the [integrity of scholarship and grades](#), and to maintain standards of professional behavior and relationships based on mutual trust and civility ([GSRR](#) 2.3). Failure on the part of a student to meet these responsibilities may result in dismissal from the program.
- C. The procedure for resolving conflicts between a graduate student and their major professor or guidance committee, or between the student and another faculty member or department administrator, is outlined in general in Article 5 of the [GSRR](#) and more specifically in the Department By-Laws, Article VI, Section 3.a.7. Essential elements of the procedure are as follows:
  - 1. It is recommended that the student first seek resolution and redress informally through discussion with the appropriate individual(s). Students are also encouraged to contact the University [Ombudsperson](#), who can provide independent and confidential advice.
  - 2. If informal resolution cannot be obtained, a formal written grievance may be sent to the department chairperson, who will convene a department hearing board following the Graduate Student Academic Grievance Hearing Procedures in Annex C. Details on initiating formal grievance procedures may be found at <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>.
  - 3. The findings of the department hearing board may be appealed to the college-level hearing board ([GSRR](#) 5.4.12).

## X. GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICY<sup>6</sup>

### A. Basis for and Terms of Appointment

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<sup>6</sup>This policy covers only research assistants and teaching assistants who by virtue of their duties are excluded from the Graduate Employees Union (GEU) bargaining unit (coded on the appointment form as R and TE, respectively). Excluded categories of graduate assistants are listed in Article 4 of the GEU contract at <https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/documents/geu-2019-2023.pdf>. Union teaching assistants (coded as T) are governed entirely by the policies and procedures set forth in the GEU contract.

## 1. Types of Assistantships

Departmental assistantships include teaching or research assistantships. Assistantship responsibilities are differentiated by the type of assistantship received. Assistantships, regardless of type, are expected to provide a learning experience that will contribute to the student's total graduate program.

### a. Teaching Assistantships

Teaching assistants assist a faculty member to present a course. In so doing the assistant gains an understanding of the teaching process. Assistants may take major responsibility for a course or a section of a course. In such a case a faculty member will be responsible for the grade distribution and will also be available to provide advice and guidance to the graduate assistant. Alternatively, a teaching assistant may assist students, develop exercises and/or examinations, and grade papers under the direction of the faculty member. Various intermediate arrangements may be specified for any particular teaching assistantship.

### b. Research Assistantships

Research assistants work on approved and funded projects in the department. The student is expected to perform whatever reasonable research tasks the assistantship supervisor may assign. A student may transfer from one assistantship supervisor to another if such a transfer is acceptable to both the new supervisor and the department. The assistantship activities may contribute directly or indirectly to the preparation of a Plan B paper, M.S. thesis, or Ph.D. dissertation.

### c. Other Assistantship Responsibilities

Regardless of the source of funding, graduate assistants are expected to contribute to the professional activities of the department.

## 2. Criteria for Selection

Assistantship recipients are selected from those submitting applications based on the needs of the department, the applicant's previous academic record, work experience, letters of recommendation and Graduate Record Examination scores. To be employed as a TA, international students must meet a minimum standard of English language fluency (see <https://elc.msu.edu/tests/msu-speaking-test/>). In addition to these criteria, the department takes into account the quality of the previous educational institution, the potential of the student with respect to research



accomplishment and future professional achievement, and the student's area of research interest relative to the availability of funds for specific research projects.

### 3. Stipends

Stipends are established each year prior to Fall Semester. Stipend information can be obtained from the Academic Program Coordinator. Stipends are subject to taxation in accordance with Federal and State laws.

### 4. Assistantship Obligation of the Student

Acceptance of a graduate assistantship creates an obligation to perform research, teaching or other activities in furtherance of departmental programs. For example, students with a one-half time appointment are expected to spend one-half time (20 hours per week) on these activities. The department attempts to allow the student flexibility in meeting this obligation. If the student puts greater emphasis on course work during a given semester, then more time on assistantship duties at other times is required to discharge the assistantship obligation.

Before leaving Michigan State University, graduate assistants are to deliver draft publications as appropriate, given the assistantship duties. These draft publications may be journal articles, extension leaflets, computer software documentation, etc. The assistant and the supervisor should agree on the nature of appropriate publication and the designation of authorship as part of the assistantship planning process. Students who publish assistantship-related research after leaving campus are expected to appropriately acknowledge the sources of financial support for that research.

### 5. Assistantship Obligation of the Department

The duties of the assistant will be supervised by a qualified person. The graduate assistant is provided a desk and office space (to the extent permitted by the space available to the department) and access to a computer as needed for assistantship work. Specific desk assignments are made by the Graduate Student Organization. Supplies for use in fulfilling assistantship responsibilities are also furnished.

The graduate assistant is allowed 14 days (10 working days) of vacation time annually, plus University holidays. Semester breaks are considered duty time. The assistantship supervisor should be informed of vacation plans and may request rescheduling if the timing interferes with fulfillment of assistantship obligations.

### 6. Duration of Appointment

This section applies to graduate assistants who are officially enrolled as students in agricultural, food, and resource economics and funded by the department. Students in other departments may be appointed as graduate assistants. Their appointments terminate as stated on the appointment form. Requests for extension must be in the department office at least four weeks prior to the end of an appointment.

The annual review of assistantship performance is conducted in April. The purpose of this review is to assess performance of graduate assistants and to review funding availability for the next academic year. Each graduate assistant's accomplishments and concerns, and the assistantship supervisor's evaluation of the student's assistantship performance, will be reported on the graduate student annual review form and submitted to the Academic Program Coordinator by April 15. Graduate assistants are notified by June 30 of the status of their assistantships for the next Fall Semester.

Assistantships supported by general research funds will typically be of short duration (1-3 semesters). Such assistantships are used primarily to support students during their first year, with the expectation that subsequent appointments will be funded under a specific contract- or grant-funded research project, or to support students who are in transition from one specific research project to another, or whose specific research funding has run out towards the end of their program.

Teaching assistantships are normally offered on a one-semester only basis with no plans for renewal. All assistantships awarded on contracts and grants are subject to the availability of funding from that particular contract or grant and may terminate earlier than the number of semesters specified below.

To ensure that funds are used effectively, and that assistants move toward completion of their programs, the department limits the number of semesters (including Summer Semester) a student can hold a graduate assistantship or fellowship or have summer hourly funding. For the student in an M.S. program, the limit is six semesters. For the student embarking on a Ph.D. program, without prior M.S. study in AFRE, the limit is 12 semesters. For the student that transfers from the AFRE M.S. program to the AFRE Ph.D. program, the limit in the Ph.D. program is 11 semesters because up to 9 credits from the M.S. program can be transferred to the Ph.D. program.

Graduate assistantships awarded to M.S. students are not automatically extended if a student is permitted to transfer to the Ph.D. program. Continuation of the assistantship should be requested in writing by the student. The department will confirm the extension in writing, if approved.

A student who is unable to complete the program in the allotted time may request an extension of the assistantship. The request will be reviewed by the department

chairperson. Each case will be considered individually, taking into account the recommendations of the assistantship supervisor, the quality of the student's graduate course program, the amount of work involved in a thesis or dissertation project, the productivity of the graduate assistant, and other pertinent factors.

#### 7. Outside Work for Pay

The assistantship represents an obligation for the student to perform various duties of benefit to the department in return for financial assistance. It is assumed that these duties in combination with the normal course of studies will amount to a full-time load.

Outside work for graduate assistants is discouraged. Before beginning outside employment, the assistant should discuss with the assistantship supervisor the outside employment and how the assistantship obligations will be fulfilled.

### **B. Termination of Appointment**

1. The assistantship will terminate upon degree completion. A student who wishes to terminate an assistantship prior to that time should notify the assistantship supervisor and Academic Program Coordinator.

2. Substandard Performance

The department may terminate a graduate assistantship for substandard performance or inability to perform expected duties. Substandard performance may be brought to the attention of the department chairperson by the assistantship supervisor or by the normal annual review of assistantship performance. Academic difficulty will result in a review of the student's overall situation by the department (see section VII.C, Academic Progress: Review Procedures and Criteria).

Whenever questions of assistantship performance arise, the department chairperson will consider each case on its merits, giving consideration to the student's assistantship productivity, course pattern and grades, recommendations of faculty, number of deferred or repeat credits and any other pertinent evidence. If a student's academic program is terminated, the assistantship is terminated.

3. Violations

The department may also terminate an assistantship in cases of violation of the [General Student Regulations contained in the \*Spartan Life\* handbook](#), or of the subsection concerning *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR)*. This action may be initiated by the department chairperson or by the student's major professor or assistantship supervisor.

#### 4. Budgetary Constraints

The department may also terminate assistantships for budgetary reasons. Should this be necessary, continuing graduate assistants will be given some priority over new appointees depending on their qualifications to perform the required activities.

#### C. Grievance Procedure

Graduate assistants may follow the normal department grievance procedure as specified by the [GSRR](#) and the [Office of the Ombudsperson](#).

#### D. External Fellowships

Receipt of externally funded fellowships by students who have written their own applications worth at least \$24,000 (direct costs) now makes the students eligible to be considered for an in-state tuition rate. The in-state tuition rate applies only to the semesters during which the student is supported by the fellowship. This policy applies only to grants funded through a competitive process by a US institution, agency, or foundation. Funds obtained through non-competitive processes (e.g., need-based fellowships) or from international sources do not qualify the students for in-state tuition rates. For more information contact the MSU Graduate School (<https://grad.msu.edu/external-funding>) or the department's Graduate Program Director.

## ANNEX A: GRADUATE PROGRAM TIMETABLES

The following are milestones to be used for degree program planning. Specific criteria for determining satisfactory academic progress are contained in Section VII, Academic Performance, and the deadlines required for maintaining satisfactory progress are highlighted below in boldface text.

### **M.S. Program**

#### Year 1

- Fall and Spring Semesters: coursework, including mathematics, statistics, and economics requirements
- Summer Semester: coursework or internship

#### Year 2

- Fall Semester: coursework
- Spring Semester: final coursework and Plan A thesis or Plan B research paper credits
- Summer Semester (if needed): completion of Plan A thesis or Plan B research paper

## Ph.D. Program

### Year 1

- Fall and Spring Semesters
  - . coursework including econometrics and microeconomic theory
- Summer Semester
  - . coursework, internship, and/or research
  - . microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics qualifying exams in May<sup>7</sup>
  - . retake of qualifying exam(s) in August (if needed)

### Year 2

- Fall and Spring Semesters
  - . applied microeconomics and field/advanced course requirement courses
- Summer Semester:
  - . internship and/or research

### Year 3

- Fall Semester
  - . coursework
  - . work on research paper
- Spring Semester
  - . coursework (if not already completed)
  - . complete research paper/comprehensive exam requirement
- Summer Semester
  - . submit research paper from comprehensive exam to a journal
  - . meet with guidance committee to discuss dissertation research plan
  - . preparation/defense of dissertation proposal

### Year 4

- . dissertation research
- . dissertation proposal must be approved by the end of Year 4
- . complete dissertation

### Year 5 (if needed)

- . complete dissertation

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<sup>7</sup> For AFRE-Economics doctoral dual major students only.

## ANNEX B: CHECKLIST OF FORMS BY STAGE OF PROGRAM

### For M.S. Students

#### Year 1

Annual review and Graduate Annual Research Overview (student.msu.edu) due April 15

Complete all Year 1 RCR requirements (student.msu.edu) by May 15

Submit major professor, guidance committee, and course program plan in GradPlan (student.msu.edu). These items must be approved by your guidance committee and the AFRE Graduate Program Director by the end of the Spring Semester.

Complete request to transfer to Ph.D. form (if applicable)

#### Year 2

Apply for graduation by the end of the first week of classes during your intended graduating semester

Annual review and Graduate Annual Research Overview (student.msu.edu) due April 15

Verify that your guidance committee and course program of study are up to date (student.msu.edu)

Provide members of your examination committee with a copy of your thesis or Plan B paper at least two weeks prior to your defense date

Report of final thesis or Plan B paper defense form due immediately following defense

Note: To receive a conferred degree in Spring Semester, you must defend and have your final thesis or Plan B paper approved, with all revisions made, by a specified date at the beginning of May each year. Check the MSU Academic Calendar, or with the Academic Program Coordinator, for this date.

Ensure that all RCR requirements (student.msu.edu) for your entire program are fulfilled by May 15

Forwarding Address Form due to the Academic Program Coordinator by completion of all degree requirements

Exit interview with AFRE Graduate Program Director due by completion of all degree requirements

## For Ph.D. Students

### Year 1

Report your planned timing for the microeconomics and econometrics cores to the Academic Program Coordinator by the first day of fall classes

Annual review and Graduate Annual Research Overview (student.msu.edu) due April 15

Meet the grade requirements for Microeconomic Theory and Econometrics, including at least one 3.5 in these courses.

Work with your advisor to begin establishing a major professor, guidance committee, and course program plan

Complete all Year 1 RCR requirements (student.msu.edu) by May 15

### Year 2

Annual review and Graduate Annual Research Overview (student.msu.edu) due April 15

Meet the Applied Microeconomics and qualifying grade requirements.

Complete all Year 2 RCR requirements (student.msu.edu) by May 15

Submit major professor, guidance committee, and course program plan in GradPlan (student.msu.edu). These items must be approved by your guidance committee and the AFRE Graduate Program Director by the end of the Summer Semester.

### Year 3

Annual review and Graduate Annual Research Overview (student.msu.edu) due April 15

Verify that your guidance committee and course program plan are up to date (student.msu.edu)

Research paper (comprehensive examination) due to all Research Paper Committee members, with a CC to the Academic Program Coordinator, at least two weeks before the Graduate Research Symposium in Spring Semester

Final research paper, as well as the Ph.D. Record of Comprehensive Exam Form, due to the Academic Program Coordinator by the last day of Spring Semester

Complete all Year 3 RCR requirements (student.msu.edu) by May 15



## Year 4

Annual review and Graduate Annual Research Overview (student.msu.edu) due April 15

Verify that your guidance committee and course program plan are up to date (student.msu.edu)

Research proposal defense report form due immediately following your research proposal defense, due by the last day of Summer Semester. You are strongly encouraged to defend your proposal much earlier than this (e.g., in Year 3 or very early in Year 4).

Completion of AFRE seminar requirement reported to the Academic Program Coordinator by August 15. (Note that this requirement must be completed by the end of Year 4 but can be completed earlier in your Ph.D. program if you prefer.)

Complete all Year 4 RCR requirements (student.msu.edu) by May 15

## Final Year (Note: students are strongly encouraged to complete their program in four years)

Apply for graduation by the end of the first week of classes during your intended graduating semester

Annual review and Graduate Annual Research Overview (student.msu.edu) due April 15

Verify that your guidance committee and course program plan are up to date (student.msu.edu)

Report of final dissertation defense form due immediately following dissertation defense

Note: To receive a conferred degree in Spring Semester, you must defend and have the Graduate School approve your final dissertation, with all revisions made, by a specified date at the beginning of May each year. Check the MSU Academic Calendar, or with the Academic Program Coordinator, for this date.

Ensure that all RCR requirements (student.msu.edu) for your entire program are fulfilled by May 15

Forwarding Address Form due to the Academic Program Coordinator by completion of all degree requirements

Exit interview with AFRE Graduate Program Director due by completion of all degree requirements

## ANNEX C: GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE HEARING PROCEDURES

### Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics

Each right of an individual places a reciprocal duty upon others: the duty to permit the individual to exercise the right. The student, as a member of the academic community, has both rights and duties. Within that community, the student's most essential right is the right to learn. The University has a duty to provide for the student those privileges, opportunities, and protections which best promote the learning process in all its aspects. The student also has duties to other members of the academic community, the most important of which is to refrain from interference with those rights of others which are equally essential to the purposes and processes of the University. (GSRR Article 1.2)

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The *Michigan State University Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR)* and the *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR)* documents establish the rights and responsibilities of MSU students and prescribe procedures to resolve allegations of violations of those rights through formal grievance hearings. In accordance with the SRR and the GSRR, the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics has established the following Hearing Board procedures for adjudicating graduate student academic grievances and complaints. (See GSRR 5.4.)

#### I. JURISDICTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, FOOD, AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS HEARING BOARD:

- A. The Hearing Board serves as the initial Hearing Board for academic grievance hearings involving graduate students who allege violations of academic rights or seek to contest an allegation of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records). (See GSRR 2.3 and 5.1.1.)
- B. Students may not request an academic grievance hearing based on an allegation of incompetent instruction. (See GSRR 2.2.2)

#### II. COMPOSITION OF THE HEARING BOARD:

- A. The Department's Hearing Board pool shall be constituted of members of the Graduate Policy Committee (GPC), which includes both faculty members and graduate students, from the current year and those from the two previous academic years who remain at MSU. The department chairperson or representative will be excluded from the Hearing board pool. Hearing Board members serve one-year terms with reappointment possible. The Hearing Board pool should include both faculty and graduate students. (See GSRR 5.1.2 and 5.1.6.)
- B. The Hearing Board shall consist of a faculty Chair, two graduate students and two faculty

members. The Chair of the Hearing Board shall vote only in the event of a tie. The Chair of the Hearing Board shall be the chair of the current GPC, unless conflicts of interest arise, in which case the first alternative will be the previous GPC chair and the second alternative the prior GPC chair. The Hearing Board Chair will select Hearing Board members by lot from among graduate student and faculty members in the Hearing Board pool who are not eligible to be Chair and among whom there are no conflicts of interest (See GSRR 5.1.2, and 5.1.5.).

- C. The Department will train hearing board members about these procedures and the applicable sections of the GSRR as needed, when a Hearing Board is constituted. (See GSRR 5.1.3.)

### III. REFERRAL TO THE HEARING BOARD:

- A. After consulting with the instructor and appropriate unit administrator, graduate students who remain dissatisfied with their attempt to resolve an allegation of a violation of student academic rights or an allegation of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records) may request an academic grievance hearing. When appropriate, the Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean, may waive jurisdiction and refer the request for an initial hearing to the College Hearing Board. (See GSRR 5.3.6.2.)
- B. At any time in the grievance process, either party may consult with the University Ombudsperson. (See GSRR 5.3.2 .)
- C. In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction, the Dean of The Graduate School will select the appropriate Hearing Board for cases involving graduate students. (See GSRR 5.3.5.)
- D. Generally, the deadline for submitting the written request for a hearing is the middle of the next semester in which the student is enrolled (including Summer). In cases in which a student seeks to contest an allegation of academic misconduct and the student's dean has called for an academic disciplinary hearing, the student has **10** class days to request an academic grievance to contest the allegation. (See GSRR 5.3.6.1 and 5.5.2.2.)
- E. If either the student (the complainant) or the respondent (usually, the instructor or an administrator) is absent from the university during that semester, or if other appropriate reasons emerge, the Hearing Board may grant an extension of this deadline. If the university no longer employs the respondent before the grievance hearing commences, the hearing may proceed. (See GSRR 5.4.9.)
- F. A written request for an academic grievance hearing must (1) specify the specific bases for the grievance, including the alleged violation(s), (2) identify the individual against whom the grievance is filed (the respondent) and (3) state the desired redress. Anonymous grievances will not be accepted. (See GSRR 5.1 and 5.3.6.)

#### IV. PRE-HEARING PROCEDURES

- A. After receiving a graduate student's written request for a hearing, the Chair of the Department will promptly refer the grievance to the Chair of the Hearing Board. (See GSRR 5.3.2, 5.4.3.)
- B. Within 5 class days, the Chair of the Hearing Board will:
  - 1. forward the request for a hearing to the respondent;
  - 2. send the names of the Hearing Board members to both parties and, to avoid conflicts of interest between the two parties and the Hearing Board members, request written challenges, if any, within 3 class days of this notification;
  - 3. rule promptly on any challenges, impanel a Hearing Board and send each party the names of the Hearing Board members. If the Chair of the Hearing Board is the subject of a challenge, the challenge shall be filed with the Dean of the College, or designee. (See GSRR 5.1.7.)
  - 4. send the Hearing Board members a copy of the request for a hearing and the written response, and send all parties a copy of these procedures.
- C. Within 5 class days of being established, the Hearing Board shall review the request, and, after considering all requested and submitted information:
  - 1. accept the request, in full or in part, and promptly schedule a hearing.
  - 2. reject the request and provide a written explanation to appropriate parties, e.g., lack of jurisdiction. (The student may appeal this decision.)
  - 3. the GSRR allows the hearing board to invite the two parties to meet with the Hearing Board in an informal session to try to resolve the matter. Such a meeting does not preclude a later hearing. However, by the time a grievance is requested all informal methods of conflict resolution should have been exhausted so this option is rarely used. (See GSRR 5.4.6.)
- D. If the Hearing Board calls for a hearing, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall promptly negotiate a hearing date, schedule an additional meeting only for the Hearing Board should additional deliberations on the findings become necessary, and request a written response to the grievance from the respondent.
- E. At least 5 class days before the scheduled hearing, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall notify the respondent and the complainant in writing of the (1) time, date, and place of the

hearing; (2) the names of the parties to the grievance; (3) a copy of the hearing request and the respondent's reply; and (4) the names of the Hearing Board members after any challenges. (See GSRR 5.4.7.)

- F. At least 3 class days before the scheduled hearing, the parties must notify the Chair of the Hearing Board the names of their witnesses and advisor, if any, and request permission for the advisor to have voice at the hearing. The chair may grant or deny this request. The Chair will promptly forward the names given by the complainant to the respondent and vice versa. (See GSRR 5.4.7.1.)
- G. The Chair of the Hearing Board may accept written statements from either party's witnesses at least 3 class days before the hearing. (See GSRR 5.4.9.)
- H. In unusual circumstances and in lieu of a personal appearance, either party may request permission to submit a written statement to the Hearing Board or request permission to participate in the hearing through an electronic communication channel. Written statements must be submitted to the Hearing Board at least 3 class days before the scheduled hearing. (See GSRR 5.4.9c.)
- I. Either party to the grievance hearing may request a postponement of the hearing. The Hearing Board may either grant or deny the request. (See GSRR 5.4.8.)
- J. At its discretion, the Hearing Board may set a reasonable time limit for each party to present its case, and the Chair of the Hearing Board must inform the parties of such a time limit in the written notification of the hearing.
- K. Hearings are closed unless the student requests an open hearing, which would be open to all members of the MSU community. The Hearing Board may close an open hearing to protect the confidentiality of information or to maintain order. (See GSRR 5.4.10.4.)
- L. Members of the Hearing Board are expected to respect the confidentiality of the hearing process. (See GSRR 5.4.10.4.and 5.4.11.)

## V. HEARING PROCEDURES:

- A. The Hearing will proceed as follows:
  - 1. Introductory remarks by the Chair of the Hearing Board: The Chair of the Hearing Board introduces hearing panel members, the complainant, the respondent and advisors, if any. The Chair reviews the hearing procedures, including announced time restraints for presentations by each party and the witnesses, and informs the parties if their advisors may have a voice in the hearings and if the proceedings are being recorded. Witnesses shall be excluded from the proceedings except when testifying. The Chair also explains:

- In academic grievance hearings in which a graduate student alleges a violation of academic rights, the student bears the burden of proof.
- In hearings in which a graduate student seeks to contest allegations of academic misconduct, the instructor bears the burden of proof.
- All Hearing Board decisions must be reached by a majority of the Hearing Board, based on a "preponderance of the evidence." (See GSRR 8.1.18.)

(See GSRR 5.4.10.1 and 8.1.18.) For various other definitions, see GSRR Article 8.)

2. If the complainant fails to appear in person or via an electronic channel at a scheduled hearing, the Hearing Board may either postpone the hearing or dismiss the case for demonstrated cause. (See GSRR 5.4.9a.)
3. If the respondent fails to appear in person or via an electronic channel at a scheduled hearing, the Hearing Board may postpone the hearing or hear the case in the respondent's absence. (See \ GSRR 5.4.9-b.)
4. If the respondent is absent from the University during the semester of the grievance hearing or no longer employed by the University before the grievance procedure concludes, the hearing process may still proceed. (See GSRR 5.3.6.1.)
5. To assure orderly questioning, the Chair of the Hearing Board will recognize individuals before they speak. All parties have a right to speak without interruption. Each party has a right to question the other party and to rebut any oral or written statements submitted to the Hearing Board. (See GSRR 5.4.10.2.)
6. Presentation by the Complainant: The Chair recognizes the complainant to present without interruption any statements relevant to the complainant's case, including the redress sought. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the complainant by the Hearing Board, the respondent and the respondent's advisor, if any.
7. Presentation by the Complainant's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the complainant's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, any statement directly relevant to the complainant's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the Hearing Board, the respondent, and the respondent's advisor, if any.
8. Presentation by the Respondent: The Chair recognizes the respondent to present without interruption any statements relevant to the respondent's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the respondent by the Hearing Board, the

complainant, and the complainant's advisor, if any.

9. Presentation by the Respondent's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the respondent's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, and statement directly relevant to the respondent's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the Hearing Board, the complainant, and the complainant's advisor, if any.
10. Rebuttal and Closing Statement by Complainant: The complainant refutes statements by the respondent, the respondent's witnesses and advisor, if any, and presents a final summary statement.
11. Rebuttal and Closing Statement by Respondent: The respondent refutes statements by the complainant, the complainant's witnesses and advisor, if any, and presents a final summary statement.
12. Final questions by the Hearing Board: The Hearing Board asks questions of any of the participants in the hearing.

## VI. POST-HEARING PROCEDURES

### A. Deliberation:

After all evidence has been presented, with full opportunity for explanations, questions and rebuttal, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall excuse all parties to the grievance and convene the Hearing Board to determine its findings in executive session. When possible, deliberations should take place directly following the hearing and/or at the previously scheduled follow-up meeting. (See Section IV.D above.)

### B. Decision:

1. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving graduate students in which a majority of the Hearing Board finds, based on a "preponderance of the evidence," that a violation of the student's academic rights has occurred and that redress is possible, it shall recommend an appropriate remedy to the Department Chair or School Director. Upon receiving the Hearing Board's recommendation, the Department Chair or School Director shall implement an appropriate remedy, in consultation with the Hearing Board, within 3 class days. If the Hearing Board finds that no violation of academic rights has occurred, it shall so inform the Chair or Director. The Chair of the Hearing Board shall promptly forward copies of the final decision to parties and the University Ombudsperson. (See GSRR 5.4.11.)
2. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving graduate students in which the Hearing Board serves as the initial hearing body to adjudicate an allegation of

academic dishonesty and, based on a "preponderance of the evidence," the Hearing Board finds for the student, the Hearing Board shall recommend to the Department Chair or School Director that the penalty grade be removed, the Academic Dishonesty Report be removed from the student's records and a "good faith judgment" of the student's academic performance in the course take place. If the Hearing Board finds for the instructor, the penalty grade shall stand and the Academic Dishonesty Report regarding the allegation will remain on file, pending an appeal, if any to the College Hearing Board within 5 class days of the Hearing Board's decision. If an academic disciplinary hearing is pending, and the Hearing Board decides for the instructor, the graduate student's disciplinary hearing before either the College Hearing Board or the Dean of The Graduate School would promptly follow, pending an appeal, if any, within 5 class days. (See GSRR 5.5.2.2, 5.4.12.3, and 5.5.2.2)

C. Written Report:

The Chair of the Hearing Board shall prepare a written report of the Hearing Board's findings, including recommended redress or sanctions for the complainant, if applicable, and forward a copy of the decision to the appropriate unit administrator within 3 class days of the hearing. The report shall indicate the rationale for the decision and the major elements of evidence, or lack thereof, that support the Hearing Board's decision. The administrator, in consultation with the Hearing Board, shall then implement an appropriate remedy. The report also should inform the parties of the right to appeal within 5 class days following notice of the decision, or 5 class days if an academic disciplinary hearing is pending. The Chair shall forward copies of the Hearing Board's report and the administrator's redress, if applicable, to the parties involved, the responsible administrators, the University Ombudsperson and the Dean of The Graduate School. All recipients must respect the confidentiality of the report and of the hearing board's deliberations resulting in a decision. (See GSRR 5.4.12 and 5.5.2.2)

## VII. APPEAL OF THE HEARING BOARD DECISION:

- A. Either party may appeal a decision by the Hearing Board to the College Hearing Board for cases involving (1) academic grievances alleging violations of student rights and (2) alleged violations of regulations involving academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, professional standards or falsification of admission and academic records.) (See GSRR 5.4.12.)
- B. All appeals must be in writing, signed and submitted to the Chair of the College Hearing Board within 5 class days following notification of the Hearing Board's decision. While under appeal, the original decision of the Hearing Board will be held in abeyance. (See



GSRR 5.4.12, 5.4.12.2 and 5.4.12.3.)

- C. A request for an appeal of a Hearing Board decision to the College Hearing Board must allege, in sufficient particularity to justify a hearing, that the initial Hearing Board failed to follow applicable procedures for adjudicating the hearing or that findings of the Hearing Board were not supported by the "preponderance of the evidence." The request also must include the redress sought. Presentation of new evidence normally will be inappropriate. (See GSRR 5.4.12.1, 5.4.12.2 and 5.4.12.4.)

#### **VIII. RECONSIDERATION:**

If new evidence should arise, either party to a hearing may request the appropriate Hearing Board to reconsider the case within **30** days upon receipt of the hearing outcome. The written request for reconsideration is to be sent to the Chair of the Hearing Board, who shall promptly convene the Hearing Board to review the new material and render a decision on a new hearing. (See GSRR 5.4.13.)

#### **IX. FILE COPY:**

The Chair of the Department shall file a copy of these procedures with the Office of the Ombudsperson and with the Dean of The Graduate School. (See GSRR 5.4.1.)

## ANNEX D: RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH (RCR) PLAN

Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research is essential in the preparation of future scholars and professionals. An understanding of the issues concerning the conduct of research in an increasingly complex world has become critical in successfully navigating the research landscape. To help prepare Michigan State University graduate students for their future scholarly work, a plan for providing the foundation of responsible conduct has been developed in coordination with the Graduate School, the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies Office, and college associate deans for graduate education. The plan is predicated on the principles that a basic understanding of issues is necessary through didactic training and a periodic reinforcement of the principles through discussion. It is the belief that this plan will provide a foundation for all graduate students as well as others pursuing a career in research and will offer the basic information to meet most, if not all, federal agency granting requirements.

The plan below represents AFREs' plan, which incorporates the basic university requirements.<sup>8</sup>

### **For all graduate professional, master's and doctoral students:**

#### **1) Year 1**

All new graduate and graduate professional students will complete 4 CITI online modules within the first year of enrollment in their program:

- Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research
- Authorship
- Plagiarism
- Research Misconduct

#### **2) Discussion-Based Training**

All graduate and graduate professional students must complete 6 hours of discussion-based training prior to reaching candidate status for Ph.D. students, and prior to receiving their degrees for master's students. The Graduate School RCR Workshop series may be used to help fulfill both the annual refresher and discussion-based training requirements.

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<sup>8</sup> Students who are supported by NSF, NIH, or USDA grants may be required to complete additional specific training; they must meet the timeline and content requirements of training for that grant. Students engaged in research involving human subjects or animal use must complete the Michigan State University training modules for those subjects before submitting IRB or IACUC approvals. These modules may be completed as part of the training requirements below.

**For master's plan A and doctoral students:**

**In addition to 1 and 2 above, master's plan A and doctoral students will complete:**

**3) Year 2**

Within the first 2 years of enrollment in their program, master's plan A and doctoral students will complete 3 additional CITI modules chosen from the RCR Basic modules listed in CITI. See <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity> for further details.

**In addition to 1, 2 and 3 above, doctoral students will complete:**

**4) Annual Refresher Training**

Starting in year 3, all doctoral students must complete 3 hours of annual refresher training; this can include discussion-based training and CITI RCR Basic modules beyond the 7 required in basic training. See <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity> for further details.

*Completion of RCR requirements will be tracked in the Student Information System ([student.msu.edu](http://student.msu.edu)).*

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Approved by Faculty (October 21, 2016). Updated in March 2022 to reflect updates to the MSU RCR requirements.